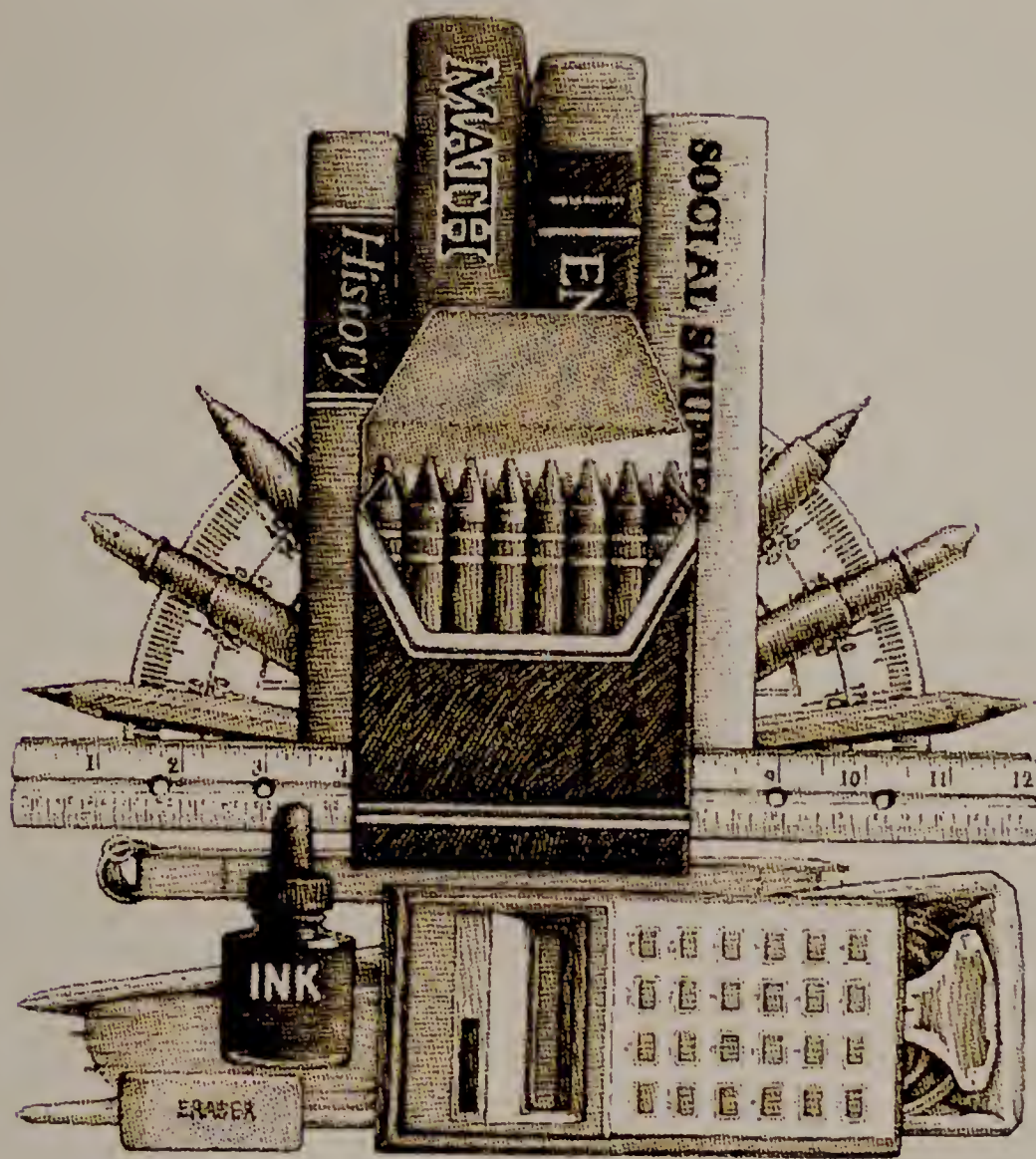


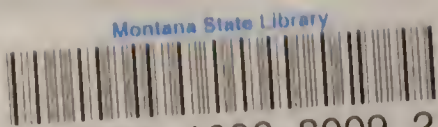
Education: 2000 and Beyond



Report to the 1995 Montana State Legislature

Nancy Keenan, Superintendent
Office of Public Instruction

Montana State Library



3 0864 1006 8009 2

Dear Friends:

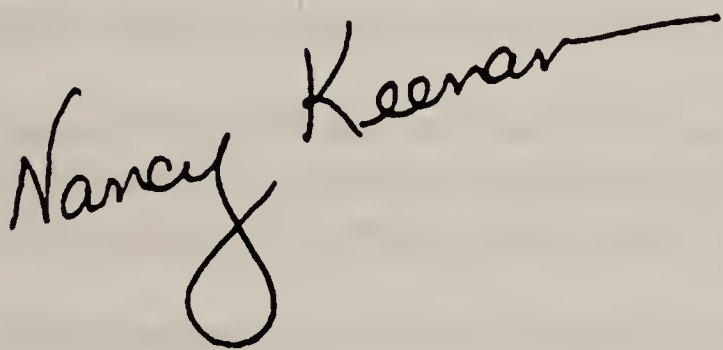
We are standing at the threshold of the 21st century. The world as we have known it is changing daily. The work place has moved beyond our borders to countries around the globe. Information is exploding; new technologies are being developed by the hour. People don't feel they live in the fast lane anymore; they feel like they live in the oncoming lane. Naturally, many people are opting to exchange urban areas for the quality of life offered by less populated areas—which leads many of them to Montana.

The effect of this change on Montana becomes very apparent when we look at our public schools and our children. School enrollment has grown 9 percent in the past five years and will continue to grow through the end of the century. The skills necessary for Montana students to succeed both academically and in the work place are much different today than even ten years ago. The condition of many children in our society has changed as well; increasing numbers of children come to school hungry, neglected, abused, and unsure of their intrinsic worth. Violence has arrived at our school yards, brought there from homes and from the streets.

The challenges facing school children and educators today are great. Schools are invested with the task of "producing" mature, responsible, and productive citizens. We cannot overlook the role education plays in creating and maintaining Montana's safe, sane, and civil society.

I look forward to working with the Montana Legislature in meeting the challenges for our children and investing in their future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nancy Keenan". The signature is written in a cursive style, with the first name "Nancy" and the last name "Keenan" clearly legible. The signature is positioned below the word "Sincerely,".

MONTANA'S HONOR ROLL

Montanans are justifiably proud of their schools, their students, and their educators, all of whom consistently win national recognition for excellence. Below are just some of the prestigious awards won by Montana students and teachers in the last year.

Top schools: Redbook magazine annually honors "America's Best Schools." Last spring, three Montana schools made the list: Bozeman High School, Rapelje High School, and Powder River County High School in Broadus.

Geography Bee: A rigorous competition that tests students' knowledge of geography, this event is one example of the kind of academic competition that OPI facilitates. Montana's 1994 state winner, Anders Knospe of Chief Joseph Middle School in Bozeman, was the national winner in 1994. Brian Hall of Browning was a top 10 finalist in the 1993 national competition.

Science awards: The 1994 National Westinghouse Science Talent Search award, often called the Nobel Prize of high school science, went to Forrest Anderson (grandson of the former Montana governor), a young man from Helena High School.

Montana students consistently produce a disproportionate number of winners at the Intermountain Regional Science Symposium. Last year, three of the top five students were from Montana. (Sarah Lord of Big Sky High School in Missoula, Forrest Anderson of Helena High School, and Brian Theroux of Sentinel High School in Missoula.)

Vocational competitions: Barry Wulf, a student at Capital High School in Helena was the national winner of the automotive service technology contest, known to some as the Heisman Trophy of automotive technology.

Cascade High School had four teams who received gold medal status in the national Future Farmers of America competition this fall, becoming the only school in the nation to have all its teams achieve that gold medal level.

History awards: For the last decade, students at C.R. Anderson Middle School in Helena have consistently brought home top awards from the National History Day competition, a rigorous event that requires original historical research. Last year was no exception.

How long can Montana's schools produce top-flight students when state support continues to erode? When a car runs out of oil, it may continue operating for a time, but eventually it will stop. Montana may not see the impact of per-pupil spending cuts this year, or even next year. Eventually, however, we will begin to see student performance decline.

SCHOOL FUNDING INFORMATION

Status of School Equalization

In 1989, the Montana Supreme Court declared Montana's system of school funding unconstitutional because of wide disparities in per-pupil spending. The 1993 Legislature addressed the issue of school equalization by adopting HB 667. Under HB 667, a school is considered equalized when its budget for the district general fund is between 80 percent and 100 percent of the maximum budget allowed by law.

HB 667 did not require high-spending districts to reduce budgets. Rather, it was anticipated that equalization would be achieved as inflationary increases and increases in state support of school funding would cause lower-spending districts to catch up over time.

This expectation has not been entirely fulfilled. While caps and maximum budget levels have frozen the level of spending by high-spending districts, 59 districts continue to budget more than the maximum level allowed.

More importantly, today, seven years after the school equalization lawsuits were filed in 1988, Montana still has 113 school districts budgeting UNDER the minimum equalization level targeted by law.

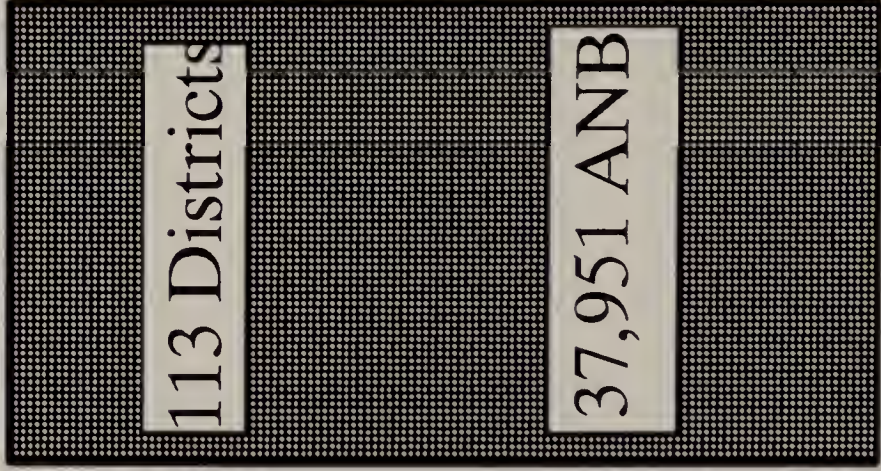
STATUS OF SCHOOL EQUALIZATION 1995



309 Districts
118,924 ANB



80-100% Range



Where Does the Money for Schools Come From?

For a school district budgeting at the maximum (100 percent) of the allowed general fund budget, the state of Montana pays the first 40 percent of the district's budget. The next 40 percent—up to the equalization level—comes from a combination of local mill levies and guaranteed tax base (GTB) support from the state. Any spending above the 80 percent equalization floor is solely financed by local revenue and local mill levies.

Once a district has reached 80 percent of the allowed general fund budget, any increases over the previous year's budget require local voter approval. Last year, 75 percent of the districts that held school levy elections were successful. Two hundred school districts did not try to run levies. Those districts, along with the districts where levies failed, were forced to cut programs and staff.

WHERE'S THE MONEY COME FROM??

20%

LOCAL MILLS

40%

LOCAL MILLS

+

GTB

40%

STATE FUNDING

Montana School Enrollment

To understand how schools are funded in Montana, one needs to understand the difference between ANB (Average Number Belonging) and enrollment. ANB is used in the state funding formula and refers to the number of students in each school district. ANB is determined based on prior year enrollment and is used to determine current year budgets. In FY 1995, there are 162,569 ANB in Montana.

Since 1990, between 1,200 and 4,200 new students have enrolled in Montana's public schools each year. Enrollment this school year exceeds 164,218, the highest enrollment level since the mid-1970s. Montana school enrollment growth is projected to continue at the rate of 1,000 to 2,000 students per year, up to the year 2000.

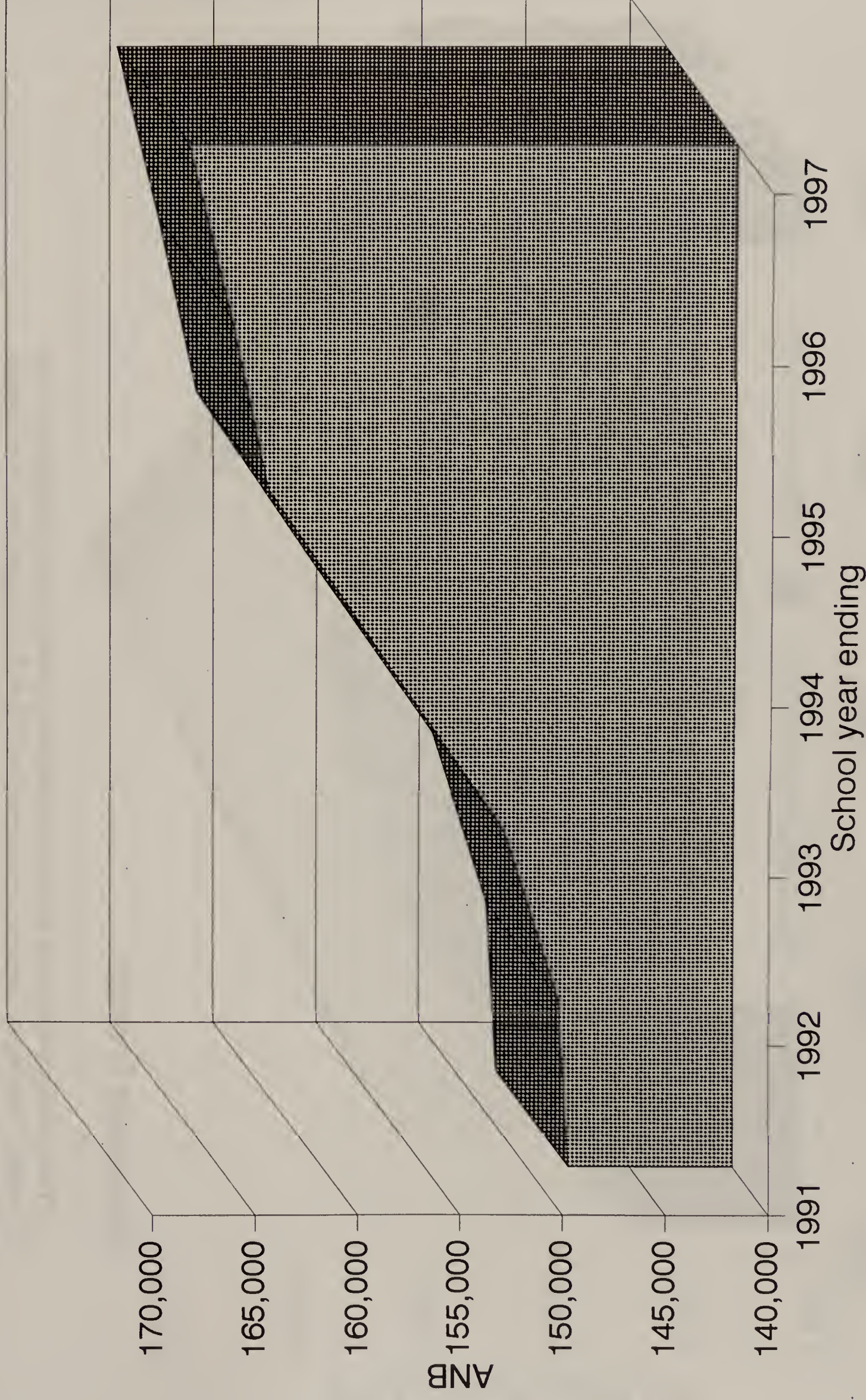
The majority of enrollment growth is occurring in the middle grades and high school levels, not in kindergarten or first-grade. This indicates that most of the new students are coming from out of state and are not the result of a higher birth rate in Montana.

When enrollment since the 1990-91 school year is examined by county, 41 counties show increases, nine counties show declining enrollment, and six counties experienced changes of less than 1 percent. Two-thirds of this five-year increase occurred in Yellowstone, Flathead, Gallatin, Missoula, Ravalli, Lewis and Clark and Cascade counties.

Between the 1989-90 and 1994-95 school years, public school enrollment grew by an additional 13,146 students, or 9 percent. Those students impacted school facilities, staffing, supplies, and budgets. Accommodating the additional students translates into a need for 280 additional elementary teachers and 1200 additional high school courses statewide. Many schools are bulging at the seams with over-crowded classrooms.

K-12 Student Growth (ANB)

Montana School Years 1991-1997

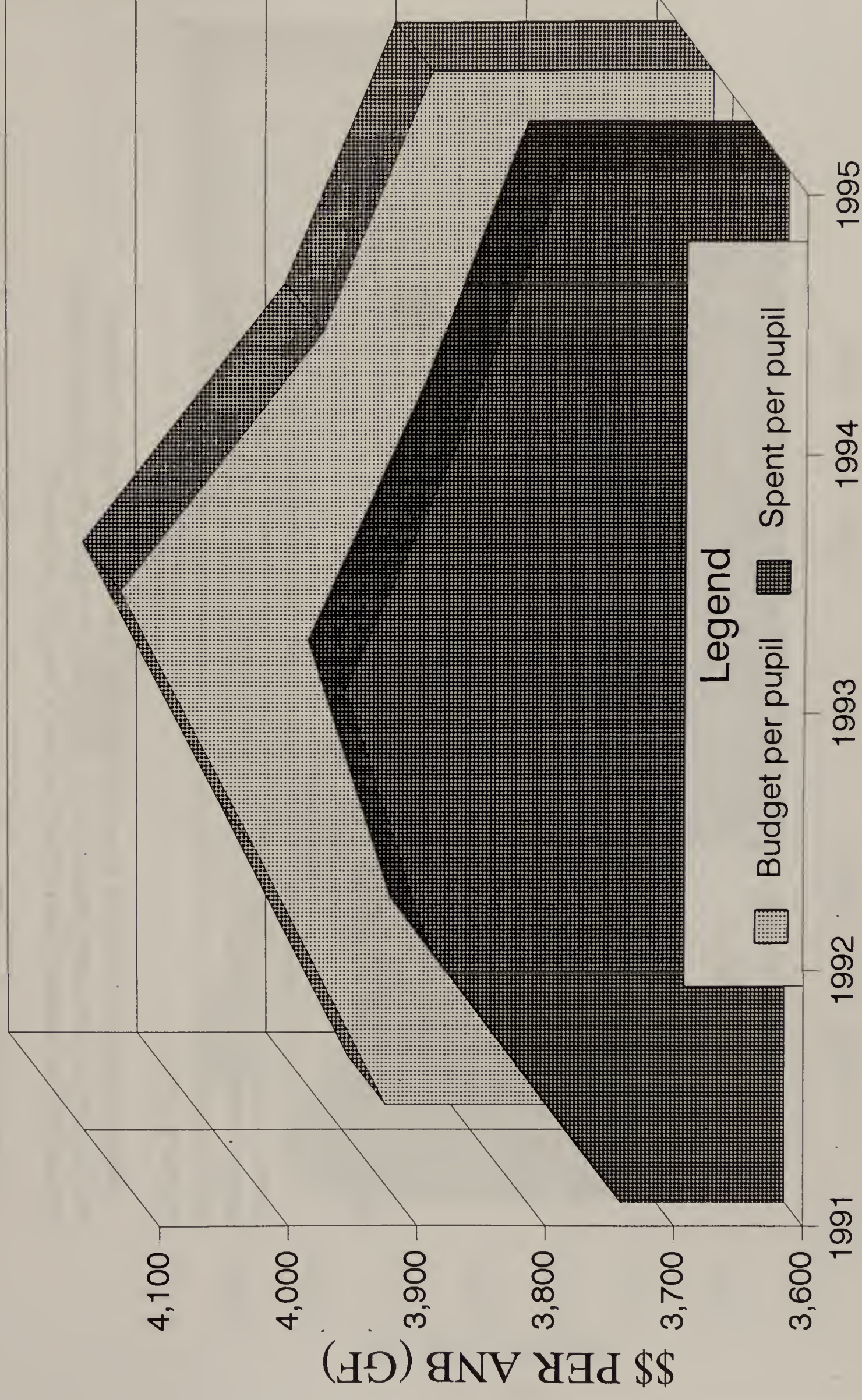


Spending Trends

While some people have the impression that school district spending is "out of control," this is not the case. As a result of HB 667, the legislature has significantly restricted school district budget growth. School district per-pupil budgets and per-pupil expenditures have been on the decline since 1993. Adjusted for inflation, the spending decline is even more dramatic.

SPENDING TRENDS

Montana School Districts



State Support of K-12 Education

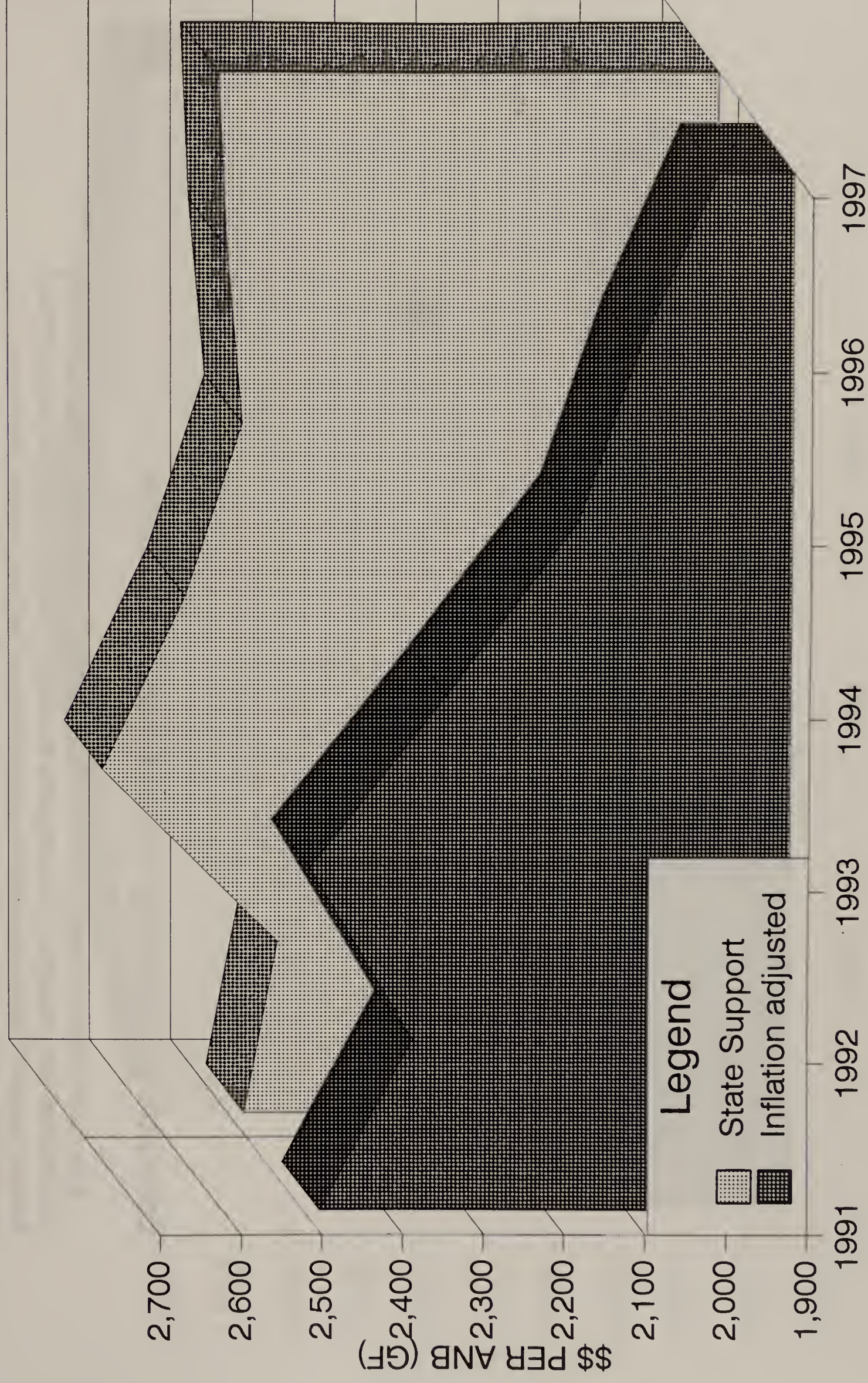
The state's per-pupil support is expected to rise slightly after 1995. This reflects the requirement that the 113 districts below the equalization level must increase their budgets during the next two years to achieve equalization. The growth in budgets will be accompanied by an increase in the state guaranteed tax base (GTB) payments to those districts.

When adjusted for inflation, however, state support shows a definite downward trend. In 1991 dollars, state general fund support of K-12 education will have declined by over \$450 per student (even if the Governor's budget is approved).

In 1993, Montana ranked 29th in the nation in per-pupil spending. In 1994, Montana fell to 31st in per-pupil spending. In fact, Montana is nearly back to the level of state support that existed the year the Montana Supreme Court ruled that the state was not meeting its constitutional responsibility in funding schools.

State Support

for K-12 Education

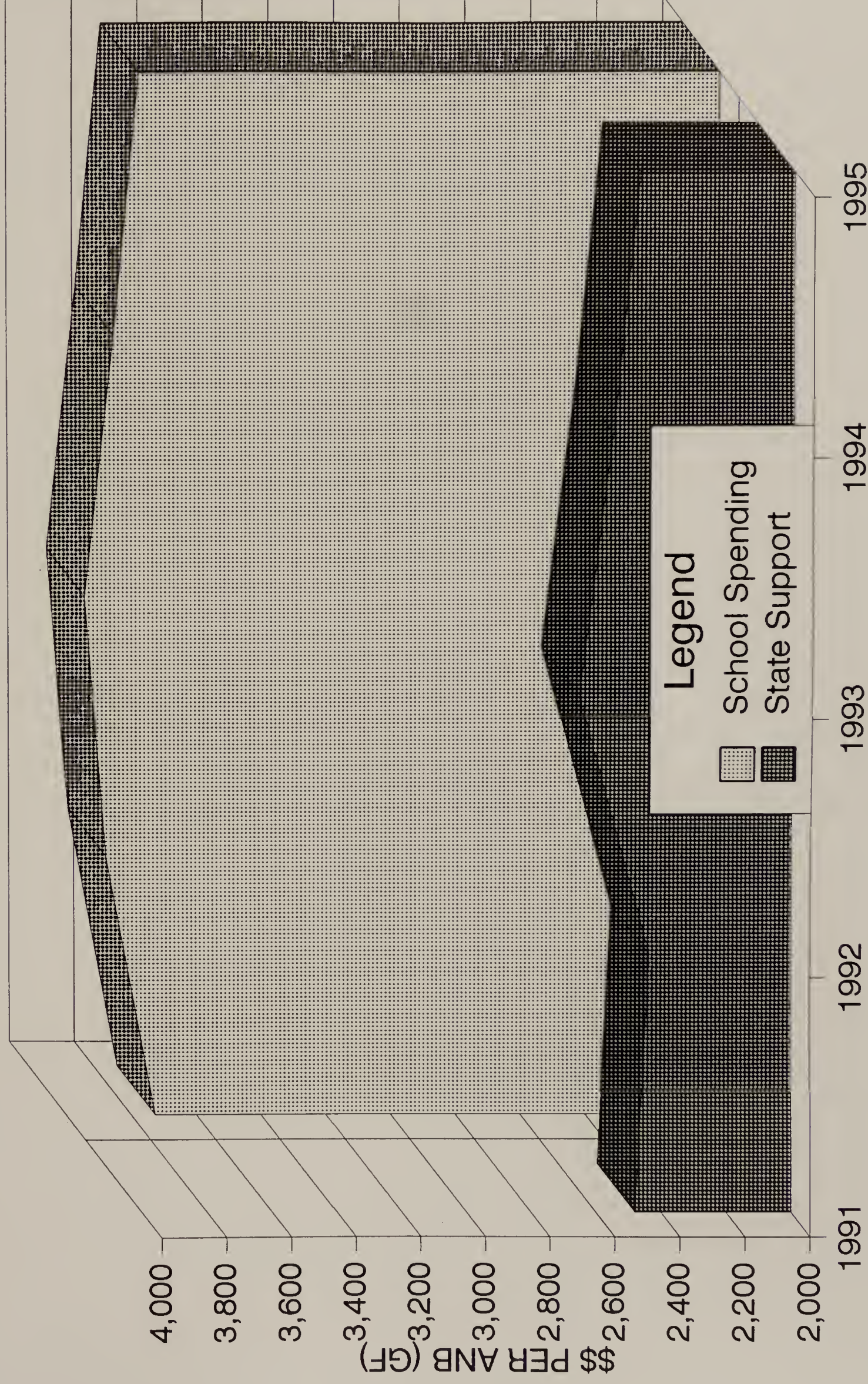


Education Spending: Local Districts vs. State

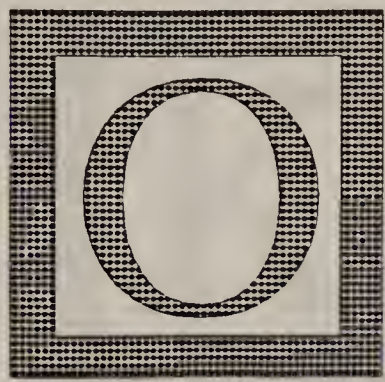
This graph shows the gap between state support of K-12 education and the amount of additional local taxpayer effort required to comply with the requirements of HB 667. As state support diminishes, districts must either cut budgets or raise local taxes. Under HB 667, equalized school districts must get voter approval for any budget increases. Across the state, districts are reducing per-pupil spending at a rate that reflects the reduction of state support for education.

EDUCATION SPENDING

Districts vs State



ABOUT THE OFFICE OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION



OFFICE of PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

"Our mission is to educate, advocate, and be accountable to those we serve."

The Office of Public Instruction exists to serve Montana's children their parents, teachers, school board members, administrators, and Montana community members.



kids

151,149
(1989-90)



164,218
(1994-95)

Services for Kids

Montana's children are at the center of everything OPI does. Currently, 164,218 students are enrolled in Montana's public schools.

Examples of the services OPI provides for children include:

- Working with schools and parents to provide a quality education for all Montana children.
- Addressing special needs of students, such as gifted and talent students, homeless students, and students with disabilities.
- Sponsoring student academic competitions, such as the state Geography Bee;
- Developing distance learning programs and operating an electronic bulletin board system (METNET), which open new opportunities for student learning;
- Supervising a statewide program of driver training (over 12,000 students completed driving training in the 1993-94 school year) and bus safety;
- Working with schools to make hot lunches available to students (over 14 million lunches were provided last year to almost 83,000 Montana students).



teachers



9,950

FULL TIME

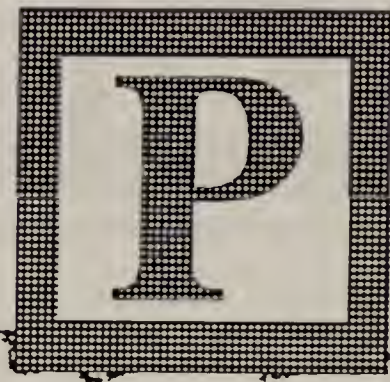
Services for Teachers

Examples of the services OPI provides for teachers and schools include:

- **Certifying teachers:** OPI processes over 6,500 teaching certificates each year. OPI also runs an intern project that helps teachers obtain specialized credentials. This has been particularly helpful in rural areas of Montana, which sometimes experience teacher shortages.
- **Curriculum guides:** Specialists at OPI have worked with educators around Montana to develop curriculum guides for subjects such as science, the arts, language, and social studies. (These are merely guides; local Montana districts determine their own curriculum.)
- **Resource materials:** Teachers often look to OPI for resource materials on topics ranging from Montana history to assessing student learning.
- **Teacher training:** The office provides many workshops and seminars to help teachers continually update their teaching skills.
- **School visitations:** Schools often ask OPI staff to provide technical assistance at the school site. Also, some laws require OPI to visit schools to make sure regulations are followed, such as in the area of special education.
- **Communications:** OPI serves as a clearinghouse of information on topics ranging from teaching methods to grants to school budgets.

Public

- Parents
- Taxpayers
- Legislators
- School Board Members



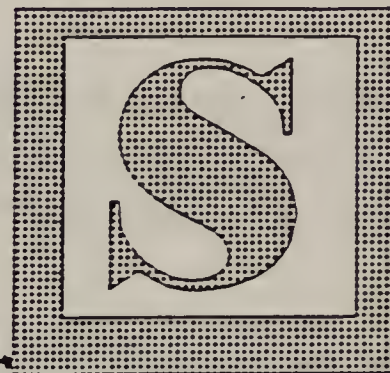
Services for Montanans

Some of the services OPI provides to Montana citizens include:

- Responding to parents who have questions about their children's needs and education;
- Providing information to taxpayers about how school dollars are spent in Montana;
- Responding to requests for information from Montana legislators;
- Providing legal assistance to school board members;
- Coordinating adult education services in Montana, including veterans' education and high school equivalency services.

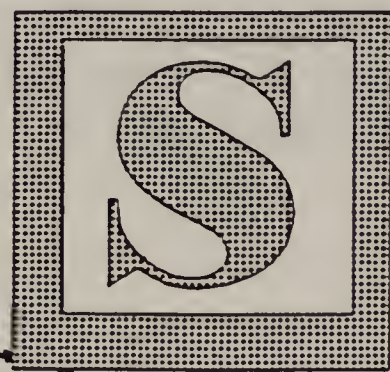
Federal Program Services

- Distribute Federal Program Funds
 - Special Ed, Title 1 & 6, Drug Free
 - Homeless, Migrant, Early Childhood
 - Eisenhower, Effective Schools, Equity
 - IDEA-B, National Origins, Commodities
 - NDN, School Food, Goals 2000, Bilingual
 - School-to-Work, Carl Perkins, JTPA
 - Special Education Pre-School
- Train School Personnel on
 - Program Requirements
 - Financial Reporting



State Grant Programs

- Distribute State Program Funds
 - Gifted and Talented
 - Vocational Education
 - In-State Residential Treatment
 - Adult Basic Education
 - Traffic Education
 - School Lunch



Distributing Funds to School Districts

The Office of Public Instruction acts as Montana's "accountant" for public education. In all, OPI manages and distributes over \$500 million in state and federal funding to Montana's 495 school districts every year.

MAE-FAIRS

In 1993, the Montana Legislature (HB 667) required OPI to computerize its system of school district financial reporting. In response, OPI developed the Montana Automated Education Finance and Information Reporting System (MAE-FAIRS), an electronic reporting system that now offers districts the convenience of submitting financial reports by computer instead of filling out a stack of paper forms.

METNET

With support from the Montana Legislature, OPI designed the METNET Telecommunications System for Montana students, teachers, administrators, librarians, and higher education. As of December 1994, METNET was used by 5,545 Montanans, including 2,430 teachers and 2,905 students.

Since 1989, METNET has allowed users around the state to tap into a vast universe of information, using any computer and a modem. Examples of information available on METNET include educational events, grant announcements, training opportunities, special projects, statistics, and school financial information

Students throughout Montana use KidsNet on METNET to access information and to learn about telecommunications. Teachers use METNET to share curriculum, teaching methods, and resources. METNET is powerful in its ability to share information not available by conventional means, either because of timing or lack of print sources.

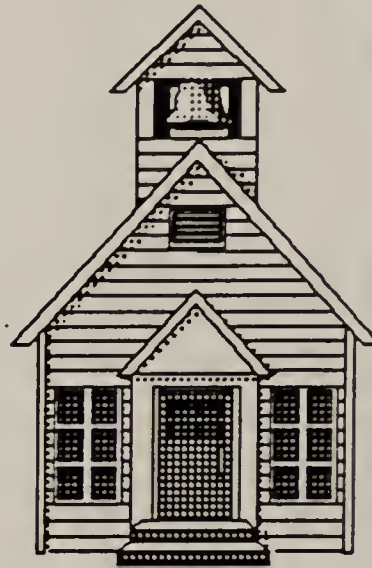
For example, half of the freshman students in a large Montana high school use a textbook called *Exploring World Cultures*, copyright 1986. The other half use a text with a 1992 copyright. Both texts contain detailed sections on the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. Neither text mentions Bosnia, Hergezovina, or any of the other new Eastern European countries.

Students on METNET, however, can access up-to-the-minute information, such as a current map of Eastern Europe showing the new and emerging nations. The map is available on METNET from the Perry Castaneda Library Map Collection, University of Texas at Austin. Not only can students access the map, they can "download" it onto their computers, print it out, and use it for their studies and reports.



Montana School Districts

- **124 schools with less than 40 students**
- **89 one teacher elementary schools**
- **9,950 Teachers**
- **495 Budget Districts**
 - *331 Elementary districts*
 - *133 High School Districts*
 - *31 K-12 Districts*
- **896 schools**
- **156 Superintendents**
- **472 Principals**



(1993-94 school year figures)

Montana School Districts

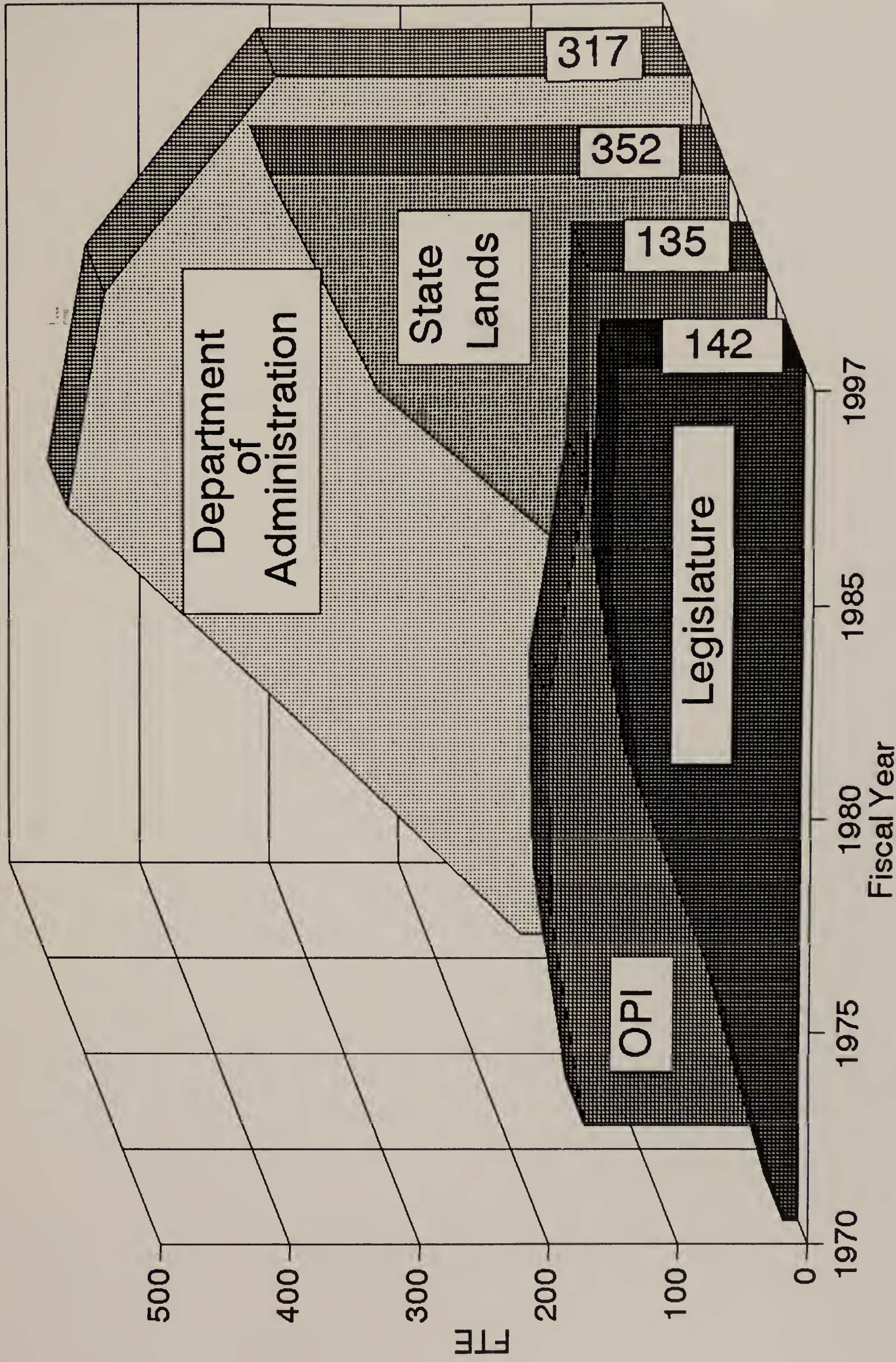
Montana is a very large state. With a population density of only 5.6 people per square mile and 1.11 public school students per square mile, it takes a large number of schools to keep the "neighborhood school" tradition alive.

OPI Staffing, FY 1970 - FY 1997

The Office of Public instruction has 135 staff members in 1995, just as it did in 1970, in spite of 25 years of new statutory requirements that have been added to OPI's workload. The office's requested staffing level for 1997 remains at 135.

In the last few years, OPI has reduced staff to absorb legislative cuts. In the special session of 1993, when school districts were required to take a 4.5 percent reduction, OPI took a 6 percent staff reduction (9 FTE). For the upcoming biennium, OPI has agreed with the governor's recommendation to reduce OPI's budget to fund staff positions by 5 percent.

STAFFING FY70-FY97



LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES for EDUCATION

After extensive discussions with Montana's education community, the Office of Public Instruction has identified three educational priorities for the 1995 legislative session, which are described below.

SPECIAL EDUCATION FUNDING

◆ BACKGROUND

The legislative appropriation for special education has remained constant at \$33.8 million per year since the 1989 legislative session. However, in the six years since that appropriation, the number of students enrolled in Montana's public schools has increased by almost 9 percent, while the number of students receiving special education services has consistently been 11 percent of total student enrollment. Districts' special education expenditures have also grown to meet those increases.

With funding for special education frozen at a time of growing enrollments, many school districts have had to shift resources away from regular education programs in order to provide special education services.

◆ THE PROPOSAL

Based on the recommendations of the Commission on Special Education Finance, the Office of Public Instruction will ask the 1995 Legislature for an additional appropriation of \$3.6 million for the first year of the next biennium and \$5.1 million for the second year.

◆ QUESTIONS/ANSWERS

Q: Won't this increase in the state special education appropriation require districts to contribute more money than they do now?

A: No. The requested increase of \$3.6 million for the first year of the biennium and \$5.1 million for the second year is meant to maintain the district's \$1 match for every \$3 provided by the state and would not increase the amount of local funding required for special education.

Q: Why is this request important to Montana's public schools?

A: Without an increase in the special education appropriation to reflect enrollment growth and inflation, the costs of special education will continue to encroach on regular education funds.

Furthermore, although the number of special education students in some categories has declined over the past six years, the number of students with emotional disturbances has increased by 55 percent since 1988-89. In addition, students who were traditionally served in residential treatment are now receiving community-based services and attending local schools. Services for students with emotional disturbances and conduct disorders are typically more costly and are urgently needed to ensure the safety of all students and staff. (See "Children With Special Needs.")

Q: Isn't the real reason for the requested increase a rapid growth in the number of special education students?

A: No. In fact, following the 1993 special education funding changes, the special education child count actually declined for the first time. The requested increase reflects the growing number of high-cost special education students being served.

Q: Where did the figure for the requested increase come from?

A: The requested increase of \$3.6 million for the first year of the next biennium and \$5.1 million for the second year is based on an analysis of enrollment growth, special education child count, and special education expenditures.

The Special Education Funding Commission, which has been reviewing special education funding for two years, recommended the increase in order to keep local contributions from increasing further.

Q: Didn't the legislature address special education funding in the 1993 session?

A: Yes. The 1993 Legislature revised the method of distributing special education funds to provide for a more equitable distribution to districts. However, there was no increase in the special education appropriation.

When the block grant portion of the formula is underfunded, more and more districts have to rely on the reimbursement portion as part of their special education funding. Those districts relying on reimbursement contribute approximately \$1 for every \$2 of state funds as a reimbursement match, as compared to the block grant match of 1 local dollar for every 3 state dollars. In addition, those districts have to wait to receive part of their funding until after the actual expenditures occur.

Q: Will this proposal require a bill?

A: No. It will be dealt with as part of the appropriations process.

Furthermore, although the number of special education students in some categories has declined over the past six years, the number of students with emotional disturbances has increased by 55 percent since 1988-89. In addition, students who were traditionally served in residential treatment are now receiving community-based services and attending local schools. Services for students with emotional disturbances and conduct disorders are typically more costly and are urgently needed to ensure the safety of all students and staff. (See "Children With Special Needs.")

Q: Isn't the real reason for the requested increase a rapid growth in the number of special education students?

A: No. In fact, following the 1993 special education funding changes, the special education child count actually declined for the first time. The requested increase reflects the growing number of high-cost special education students being served.

Q: Where did the figure for the requested increase come from?

A. The requested increase of \$3.6 million for the first year of the next biennium and \$5.1 million for the second year is based on an analysis of enrollment growth, special education child count, and special education expenditures.

The Special Education Funding Commission, which has been reviewing special education funding for two years, recommended the increase in order to keep local contributions from increasing further.

Q: Didn't the legislature address special education funding in the 1993 session?

A: Yes. The 1993 Legislature revised the method of distributing special education funds to provide for a more equitable distribution to districts. However, there was no increase in the special education appropriation.

When the block grant portion of the formula is underfunded, more and more districts have to rely on the reimbursement portion as part of their special education funding. Those districts relying on reimbursement contribute approximately \$1 for every \$2 of state funds as a reimbursement match, as compared to the block grant match of 1 local dollar for every 3 state dollars. In addition, those districts have to wait to receive part of their funding until after the actual expenditures occur.

Q: Will this proposal require a bill?

A: No. It will be dealt with as part of the appropriations process.

CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

◆ BACKGROUND

Montana communities recently have experienced dramatic changes in services to children with special needs. The changes include:

- * a 55 percent growth over the past six years in children identified as having emotional disturbance;
- * the establishment of Managing Resources Montana;
- * a potential managed care program for children's mental health services;
- * a significant decrease in the number of children in residential and psychiatric hospitals;
- * the development of community-based youth corrections programs.

The shifting focus to community-based services for these children has resulted in increasing numbers of youths with significant emotional, social, and behavioral problems in our communities and public schools. This has created a "powder keg" situation in our schools that presents serious safety concerns for staff and other students.

◆ THE PROPOSAL

Governor Racicot's budget proposal offers an opportunity to address pressing school, family, and community needs in Montana. The Community Impact Program will provide over \$4.1 million per year over the next biennium to ensure that none of Montana's children fall through the cracks.

The Community Impact Program will address the needs of communities in serving youth who are not being adequately served by existing programs. These funds will allow key community players such as schools, law enforcement, and human service agencies to design child- and family-specific plans. The funds will be flexible enough to avoid the counter-productive labeling which has sometimes left children unserved and communities at risk.

◆ QUESTIONS/ANSWERS

Q: What are some examples of ways Community Impact Funds could be used?

A: Examples include:

- * statewide, comprehensive staff training;
- * school-within-a-school programs (alternative schools);
- * day treatment programs to serve children with conduct disorders;
- * alternative placements within the community, such as Jobs for Montana Graduates;
- * aftercare services for students returning to the community from an institution;
- * establishment of alternative education sites (such as detention center programs)

- where necessary to ensure safe schools;
- * sex offender treatment and supervision;
 - * community service and restitution programs;
 - * intensive supervision and mentoring programs;
 - * family counseling and crisis intervention;
 - * chemical dependency treatment.

Q: How would the funds be distributed?

A: Except for limited funds for statewide training efforts and program evaluation, all funds will be granted to each Dept. of Family Services (DFS) regional office on the basis of each region's public school student enrollment. Each regional office will serve as a clearinghouse for funding requests for communities.

Q: How can we be sure schools will receive their fair share of funds?

A: A subcommittee of the Local Family Services Advisory Council will be formed, consisting of a Dept. of Family Services representative, a school representative, and a juvenile justice representative to establish and review the application process for the distribution of community impact funds.

TECHNOLOGY FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING

◆ BACKGROUND

Technology is widely recognized by educators, parents, and business leaders as a powerful tool for improving the teaching and learning of reading, writing, math, science, social studies, and all other subjects.

Technology frees Montana students from their geographic isolation. It offers them the same kinds of educational opportunities available to students in major urban areas. This is especially important to rural Montana students.

Today, technology is an essential part of a quality education. Students will need a solid background in technology in order to succeed in almost any chosen career.

Many of Montana's schools are already using technology to improve teaching and learning, with excellent results. However, many students do not have access to technology.

Simply bringing a computer or satellite dish into a school does not guarantee better teaching and learning. Educators must know how to use the technology effectively in their classrooms. Also, technology must be integrated into each school's overall plan for improving teaching and learning.

◆ THE PROPOSAL

The Office of Public Instruction is drafting a bill to invest \$5 million dollars in a trust account to support educational technology in Montana classrooms. The bill drafting request number is LC 1237.

◆ QUESTIONS/ANSWERS

Q: Where would the \$5 million come from?

A: The state Dept. of Revenue has drafted an oil and gas tax reform bill for consideration by the 1995 Legislature. The bill has the support of Governor Racicot and the oil and gas industry. One result of the bill would be a one-time accelerated payment of oil and gas severance taxes. This would create a one-time windfall of \$5 million, which would be available to the state school equalization account. OPI proposes to invest that \$5 million in a "trust fund" for educational technology.

Q: How would the \$5 million be used?

A: Governor Racicot and Superintendent Keenan have jointly appointed a state-wide educational technology task force under The Montana Plan: Making Good Schools Better (funded by Goals 2000). This task force is developing a plan for the role of technology in Montana schools.

Under OPI's legislative proposal, the \$5 million would be used to help implement the task force's plan. Members of the task force would make recommendations for how the \$5 million would be spent. Most likely, a competitive grant program for local schools would be developed. Schools that receive grants would be required to: a) develop a plan for educating staff in the use of technology; and b) demonstrate how the grant funds will fit with the school's overall plan for integrating technology into the classroom.

Q: Would this proposal take oil and gas tax revenues away from local districts?

A: No. The Dept. of Revenue bill creates two different pools of money, one that will go to local school districts, the other to the state equalization account. OPI's proposal would not affect local districts' revenues.

Q: Who is on the educational technology task force?

A: Members include the following:

- Marcia Bragg - Glasgow
- Russ Cravens - Helena
- Cynthia Denton - Hobson
- Bruce Dunkle - Helena
- Russell Gopher - Box Elder
- Gary Graves - Frenchtown
- Frank Odasz - Dillon
- Barbara Ridgway - Helena
- Richard Thronson - Scobey
- Bruce Whitehead - Missoula

WORKFORCE PREPARATION

◆ BACKGROUND

All Montana children deserve the opportunity to graduate from high school prepared for the next step in their lives, whether it be college, technical school, employment, the military, an apprenticeship, or another chosen path.

Currently, a few Montana students have access to career exploration and work-site experiences. However, Montana needs to expand current efforts into a comprehensive system that prepares ALL students for high-wage, high-skill jobs and further education.

America is the only industrialized nation without a formal system for helping students prepare for work and enter the work force. But that's changing. Across the country, businesses, schools, postsecondary institutions, and others are beginning or expanding workforce preparation (also called "school-and-work") partnerships.

The U.S. Congress gave strong bipartisan support to workforce preparation education when it passed the School-To-Work Opportunities Act (STWOA), signed by President Clinton in May 1994. The act provides seed money for states to develop education and training systems that meet the needs of local communities.

In Montana, a partnership including Governor Racicot, the Office of Public Instruction, the Commissioner of Higher Education, the Dept. of Labor and Industry, and the Dept. of Commerce has been developing a vision for a comprehensive system of workforce preparation education. Montana has received a federal grant to support this effort. The effort has broad-based involvement and support from educators, parents, business leaders, organized labor, and community members throughout Montana.

The lead agency for Montana's federal grant is the Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education. OPI has been actively involved in all of the phases of the development grant.

◆ THE PROPOSAL

The partnership including the Governor's office, OPI, the Commissioner of Higher Education, the Department of Labor and Industry, and the Department of Commerce will ask the 1995 Legislature to adopt a workforce preparation resolution.

The resolution calls for developing and implementing a comprehensive, coherent system of education and training that prepares Montana's workforce to compete in

the next century. It also calls for a collaborative effort to integrate education and training programs into one comprehensive system.

◆ QUESTIONS/ANSWERS

Q: Does the resolution ask for state funds?

A: No. It merely asks the legislature to support ongoing efforts.

Q: What will Montana's workforce preparation system look like?

A: It will be an integrated system of work-based learning, school-based learning, and connecting activities. There are as many approaches to workforce preparation as there are individual communities. The STWOA explicitly calls for local flexibility. Montana's system will be developed by and for local communities, with state support.

For a system to qualify for STWOA funding, three essential elements must be in place:

- **Work-based learning:** This may include activities such as actual work experience, workplace mentoring programs, job shadowing, and broad instruction in industry-specific skills. Work-based learning enables students to experience the real world of work and life.
- **School-based learning:** The program of study must meet challenging academic standards in core subjects and should integrate academic and occupational learning.
- **Connecting activities.** These activities match students with employers and link high schools with postsecondary schools.

Other common elements include the following:

- **Classroom curriculum** is linked to work-site and community experiences, making a clear connection for students between academics and the world of work.
- **Teaching strategies** recognize that students have different learning styles and that most students learn best by solving real-world problems rather than learning content out of context.
- **Business** is a key player, contributing on-the-job training, tours, presentations, funding, mentors, supervisors, equipment, supplies, and jobs.
- **Career guidance** plays an important role. It familiarizes students and their families with many career options, provides information on what is required to be successful in various careers, and helps students explore their own interests and aptitudes.

Q: Does workforce preparation lock students into a career path at a too-early age?

A: No. Nobody wants to see students lock into career paths without the possibility of changing. Workforce preparation education should not just prepare students for one career; it should provide a solid base of skills and learning that will serve them in many careers.

Q: Does workforce preparation emphasize work at the expense of academic studies?

A: No. Academic studies are an essential part of workforce preparation. The emphasis must be on learning, not on working. Part-time jobs should not detract from lessons and skill-building. Getting paid should never overshadow the importance of acquiring knowledge and experiencing career possibilities.



Nancy Keenan, Superintendent
P.O. Box 202501
Helena, MT 59620-2501

200 copies of this public document were published at an estimated cost of \$2.00 per copy, for a total cost of \$400, which includes \$400 for printing and \$.00 for distribution.